

STATE OF KANSAS EMPLOYEE SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2000, the State of Kansas began designing a first-ever survey of its employees to determine levels of employee satisfaction. The survey instrument was developed by a team of professors from the University of Kansas as well as staff from the state Department of Administration. The state Department of Administration provided the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the Policy Research Institute, University of Kansas with the list of employees for whom current records were available. The Kansas State Employee Survey was a self-administered survey mailed to nearly 27,000 state employees. During December 2000 and January 2001 SRC conducted a first and second mailing of the survey. A total of 11,734 usable surveys were returned for a response rate of almost 44 percent. Based on the number of completed surveys and the response distribution, we can be 95 percent confident that the margin of error for the survey is $\pm .009$ percent.

Key findings of the study include:

- **Pay.** Kansas state employees are dissatisfied with their pay. Survey results for pay show that a majority of state employees believe (1) they are not paid a fair amount, (2) pay raises are not satisfactory, and (3) they are paid less than they could earn in a private sector job. About 70% of state employees feel they are not paid a fair salary and that the low level of their pay makes them feel unappreciated by their state and their agency. Only about 15% of state employees are satisfied with the amount of their pay raises. An important finding is that over 85% of state employees believe that their current pay is below what they could earn in the private sector. The risk of the state is that substantial numbers of employees may test their value to employers in the private sector by seeking other jobs and confirming their perceptions of unsatisfactory pay.

Over 88% of public safety employees express dissatisfaction with pay. Also, female employees are slightly more dissatisfied with pay than are male employees. The region with the lowest level of pay satisfaction is the south central region that includes Wichita.

- **Contingent Rewards.** Most state employees do not see a connection between their effort or effectiveness and the rewards they receive. This is shown by the 71% of state employees who disagree with statement that "hard work is usually rewarded at my agency." Further, only 13% agreed that "people who are more effective get higher pay raises than those who are less effective." If employees do not see a connection between their efforts or effectiveness and rewards, there is obviously less of an incentive to work hard and make an extra effort in the performance of their jobs. The end result will be lower level of service to customers.
- **Promotion Opportunities.** After pay, the greatest source of employee dissatisfaction is promotion opportunities. Employees are concerned with too few opportunities for promotions and the way promotions are given. About 76% of state employees believe that there is usually too little chance for promotion in their agency. Only about 20% say that promotional opportunities encourage them to remain state employees. Also of great concern is that many state employees are not satisfied with the way promotions are handled by their agencies. Only 37% believe that promotions are given in a fair manner by their agencies. About 75% perceive that "you have to know the right people to get ahead in the state system." Overall, state employees are skeptical that merit-based promotions exist in Kansas state employment.
- **Benefits.** State employees are more satisfied with their benefits than with pay. Overall, 68% of employees say they are satisfied with the benefits they receive.
- **Change Processes.** State employees are neutral with respect to change processes in their agencies. The basic findings are (1) most employees accept change, (2) there are sufficient communication with employees concerning changes in their agencies, and (3) employees perceive that their roles in change processes are limited. About 58% of state employees say that change is viewed as

positive in their agency and 60% say their agencies try new and better ways of doing things. While a majority of employees believe they "generally feel informed about changes that affect me," 65% of employees report they "usually hear about important changes through rumors rather than through management communications."

- **Training and Development.** State employees have mixed feelings on training and development. About 65% believe they are getting the training that is needed to do their jobs and 74% of supervisors are perceived as encouraging and support training. However, a smaller percentage, 45%, say they are in agencies that do not offer training on advances in technology that affect the employee's job.
- **Work Environment.** State employees are neutral with respect to their work environment. About 69% of employees agree "the work environment positively influences how I do my work in my agency." In addition, 74% disagree with the statement that "if I need help doing my job, co-workers are not willing to pitch in and help." The major concerns are conflicts and inadequate ways to solve problems working with each other. Only 45% agree with the statement, "conflict resolution is achieved effectively in my agency," and 35% say that "lingering conflicts that exist in my agency have caused me to look for employment elsewhere."
- **Communications.** Employees are evenly divided on the adequacy of communications in their agency. Almost 49% say they are "very satisfied with communications in my agency," and 51% disagree with that statement. About one-third of employees say they do not receive enough information from their agency to do their jobs well, and that the goals of their agency are not clear to them. Just over one-half of employees report that "communications are not open or candid in my agency."
- **Performance Evaluation and Feedback.** A majority of state employees (75%) describe themselves as being satisfied with performance evaluation and feedback in their jobs. About 73% believe that evaluations provide valuable feedback "about aspects of my job I do well, and about areas in which I need improvement." Also, a majority of employees (65%) are confident in their supervisor's ability to provide "meaningful performance feedback throughout the year." One area of concern is that a significant number of employees (44%) are not convinced that the performance evaluation system is fair.
- **Nature of Work.** Overall, 80% of state employees are satisfied with the nature of the work they perform. Almost 66% agree that they "enjoy coming to work each day" and 85% describe themselves as "getting a feeling of satisfaction from my work." Also of importance is that over 75% of employees agree with the statement, "I am proud to be a state employee."
- **Supervision.** A majority of state employees are satisfied with their supervisors. Over 74% of employees agree with the statement, "my supervisor is very competent in doing his/her job." About 82% acknowledge that their supervisor is "fair" in regards to the treatment they receive. It is also noteworthy that 64% agree that they have a high quality relationship with their supervisor and that this contributes to their decision to remain a state employee. Supervision appears to be one of the most positive aspects of state employment.
- **Individual Competency.** One clear finding is that Kansas state employees believe they are highly competent. About 95% agree with the statement, "I feel I am well prepared to do my job."
- **Retention of State Employees.** About 82% of employees indicate that they are "currently able and willing to take a better job should one become available," and 66% indicate that they have "thought about looking for a job opportunity outside of state employment" in the last year. However, a smaller number (42%) indicate that they actually "plan to seek employment outside of state government within the next year." Only 28% state that they have actually "applied for a job

outside of state government" within the last year. Still, it is significant that almost one-third of state employees have applied for work elsewhere.

African-American and Native Americans are among the most likely to leave state employment. About 58% of both groups indicate intent to leave. Also, employees 25-35 are the most likely age group to leave state employment. About 56% of these employees indicate their intent to leave.

Not surprisingly, the employees most likely to stay in their current jobs are those who are satisfied with their pay and the nature of the work they perform.

- **Implications of Dissatisfaction with Compensation.** There are several important implications of the strong dissatisfaction Kansas state employees feel with respect to their compensation. Over 85% believe that their current pay is below what they could earn in a private sector job. Over 72% indicate that they "feel unappreciated by the State and my agency when I think about what they pay me." Over 70% indicate that the "level of my pay encourages me to seek employment outside of state government." Hence, it is very likely that employee turnover rates in state agencies will increase if the economy remains reasonably strong. Increases in voluntary turnover rates will most likely result in increased costs for recruitment, selection, and training of replacement employees. Services provided to the citizens of Kansas will likely deteriorate in quality, at least in the short term, while the replacement employees learn how to do and gain experience in their new jobs.

There are also significant implications for services provided to the citizens of Kansas by state employees who remain in their jobs. Almost 70% of state employees indicate that they are **not** paid a fair amount for the work that they do. Many of these employees have jobs that require the discretionary application of their knowledge, skills, and effort. These employees have the option to reduce their activities and level of effort in order to restore their perception of equity in their respective wage-for-effort bargains. This, too, can result in lower quality state services for citizens of Kansas.